

# Folklore Music Performance and the Role of Uzbek National Customs

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**Annotatsiya:** This article explores the role of Uzbek national customs in folklore music performance and their significance in shaping cultural identity, artistic expression, and social values. Folklore music in Uzbekistan is not merely an artistic phenomenon but also a reflection of centuries-old traditions, rituals, and communal life. The study analyzes how national customs influence musical performance practices, including singing styles, instrumental usage, performance contexts, and ceremonial functions. It also examines the continuity of oral traditions and their transformation in modern cultural environments. Special attention is given to the interconnection between folklore music and social rituals such as weddings, harvest celebrations, religious ceremonies, and family gatherings. The article emphasizes that Uzbek folklore music serves as a bridge between past and present, preserving cultural memory while adapting to contemporary artistic demands.

**Kalit soʻzlar:** Folklore music, Uzbek national customs, oral tradition, cultural heritage, ritual music, traditional performance, identity, musical ethnography.

## Introduction.

Folklore music in Uzbekistan represents one of the most ancient and deeply rooted forms of artistic expression that reflects the spiritual life, worldview, and social structure of the Uzbek people. It is closely connected with national customs and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation through oral transmission. These customs are not only cultural practices but also a fundamental source of inspiration and structure for musical performance. In Uzbek society, folklore music has always played an important role in everyday life, accompanying various rituals, ceremonies, and communal activities. It functions as a living archive of history, preserving the values, beliefs, and emotions of the people. The development of Uzbek folklore music is closely tied to the historical formation of the nation itself. For centuries, different regions of Uzbekistan have developed unique musical traditions influenced by local customs, dialects, and lifestyles. Despite regional diversity, there is a strong unity in the core values expressed through folklore music, particularly respect for elders, hospitality, family unity, love for nature, and spiritual purity. These values are deeply embedded in musical texts, melodies, and performance styles. One of the most significant aspects of Uzbek folklore music is its connection with ritual life. National customs such as weddings, birth ceremonies, religious holidays, and seasonal festivals have always included musical performances. Wedding ceremonies, for example, are incomplete without traditional songs that express joy, blessings, and hopes for the future. These songs are performed by professional folk musicians as well as community members, demonstrating the collective nature of musical culture. Similarly, mourning rituals include lament songs that reflect grief and respect for the deceased, showing how music expresses both happiness and sorrow in human life. Another important element is the oral nature of folklore music. Unlike written musical traditions, Uzbek folk music is transmitted orally, which allows it to remain flexible and adaptable. Each performer brings personal interpretation while preserving the core structure of the song. This oral tradition ensures continuity while also allowing evolution. National customs play a crucial role in maintaining this continuity because they provide the context in which songs are learned, performed, and remembered. Without these customs, folklore music would lose its cultural grounding and social function. Instrumental performance is also deeply influenced by national customs. Traditional instruments such as the dutar, doira, tanbur, and surnay



are not only musical tools but also symbolic elements of cultural identity. Each instrument is associated with specific occasions and emotional expressions. For example, the doira is often used in festive celebrations, while wind instruments like surnay are associated with public ceremonies and outdoor gatherings. The selection of instruments is therefore not random but determined by cultural norms and traditions.

Folklore music also plays an educational role in Uzbek society. Through songs, young generations learn about moral values, historical events, and social expectations. Parents and elders often use folk songs as a means of teaching children about respect, patience, love for homeland, and proper behavior. This educational function strengthens the connection between music and national customs, making folklore music a tool for cultural transmission. In modern times, globalization and technological development have influenced folklore music performance. While some traditional practices have changed, national customs continue to provide a foundation for cultural preservation. Many artists and cultural institutions are actively working to preserve and promote folklore music through festivals, recordings, and educational programs. These efforts help maintain the relevance of traditional music in contemporary society. The performance context of folklore music is also important. Unlike staged classical concerts, folklore music is often performed in informal and communal settings. These include family gatherings, village celebrations, and seasonal festivals. Such environments create a strong emotional connection between performers and audiences. The participation of the community is a key feature, as audience members often join in singing, dancing, or rhythmic accompaniment. This participatory nature reflects the collective spirit of Uzbek national customs. Symbolism is another essential aspect of folklore music. Many songs contain metaphorical expressions related to nature, love, and human destiny. These symbols are deeply connected to cultural beliefs and traditional worldview. For example, references to flowers, rivers, and mountains often symbolize beauty, purity, and continuity of life. National customs help interpret these symbols within a shared cultural framework. The role of folklore music in identity formation cannot be underestimated. For the Uzbek people, traditional music serves as a marker of cultural belonging. It strengthens national pride and fosters unity among different social groups. In this sense, folklore music is not only an artistic form but also a social institution that supports cultural cohesion.

Folklore music in Uzbekistan is also closely connected with the system of intangible cultural heritage, which includes oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, festive events, and traditional knowledge. Within this system, national customs function as a regulating mechanism that defines when, where, and how musical performances should take place. This regulation is not formal or written, but rather based on long-standing social norms and collective memory. As a result, folklore music becomes a culturally coded practice that carries deep symbolic meaning for the community. It is important to note that Uzbek folklore music is characterized by its diversity, which is directly influenced by regional customs and lifestyles. Different regions such as Khorezm, Bukhara, Fergana, and Surkhandarya have their own unique performance traditions, melodic structures, and poetic styles. However, despite these differences, the underlying cultural values remain consistent, demonstrating the unity of Uzbek national identity. This unity is primarily maintained through shared customs that guide musical expression and performance behavior. Another significant aspect is the improvisational nature of folklore music. Performers often adapt lyrics, melodies, and rhythms depending on the audience, occasion, and emotional atmosphere. This flexibility is possible because national customs provide a general framework rather than strict rules. In this sense, folklore music reflects a balance between tradition and creativity, where inherited cultural norms coexist with individual artistic interpretation. Furthermore, folklore music plays an important role in strengthening social cohesion within communities. During traditional events such as weddings, harvest festivals, and communal celebrations, music serves as a unifying force that brings people together. It encourages participation, emotional sharing, and collective identity formation. These functions are deeply rooted in Uzbek national customs, which emphasize solidarity, respect, and mutual support among community members. In educational terms, folklore music is also used as an informal tool for cultural learning. Young people acquire knowledge about traditions, moral values, and social behavior through participation in musical activities. Elders and experienced performers act as cultural transmitters, ensuring that national customs are passed on to future generations. This intergenerational transmission is one of the key factors in the sustainability of Uzbek folklore music. Overall, the study of folklore music in relation to Uzbek national customs provides valuable insight into the cultural, historical, and social development of the nation. It reveals how deeply music is embedded in everyday life and how it functions as a living



expression of collective identity. Understanding this relationship is essential for preserving cultural heritage and supporting its continued development in the modern world.

In addition to its cultural and social functions, Uzbek folklore music also plays a significant role in shaping the emotional and psychological worldview of individuals. Traditional songs, melodies, and rhythmic patterns often reflect human emotions such as joy, sorrow, hope, longing, and gratitude. These emotional expressions are not random but are structured according to national customs, which determine the appropriate musical form for each life situation. For example, celebratory songs differ greatly from mourning chants, both in melody and performance style, reflecting the moral and ethical framework of society. Another important dimension is the role of folklore music in maintaining ethical and aesthetic education within the community. Through musical texts and performance practices, values such as honesty, respect for elders, love for homeland, and hospitality are continuously reinforced. National customs ensure that these values are not only preserved in abstract form but are actively practiced and experienced through music. In this way, folklore music becomes a medium of moral upbringing and cultural education. Furthermore, the preservation of Uzbek folklore music is closely linked with cultural sustainability and national identity in the context of globalization. As modern cultural influences expand, there is an increasing need to protect traditional forms of expression from losing their authenticity. National customs act as a protective cultural mechanism that resists excessive external influence while allowing gradual adaptation. This dynamic ensures that folklore music remains relevant without losing its original essence. It is also worth noting that folklore music contributes to intercultural dialogue by presenting Uzbek culture to the world. Through performances at international festivals, cultural exchanges, and academic research, Uzbek traditional music is recognized as an important part of global intangible heritage. In these contexts, national customs become a key element that distinguishes Uzbek folklore music from other traditions and highlights its uniqueness. From a historical perspective, Uzbek folklore music has evolved through centuries of cultural interaction, migration, and regional development. Each historical period has contributed new layers to musical traditions, yet national customs have consistently ensured continuity and stability. Even when external influences entered the region through trade routes and cultural exchange, they were adapted into existing traditional frameworks rather than replacing them. This adaptive nature demonstrates the resilience of Uzbek musical culture and the central role of customs in preserving its identity. In addition, folklore music is closely associated with language and poetic traditions. The lyrics of folk songs are often based on classical poetic forms, oral storytelling, and vernacular expressions. National customs influence not only how these texts are performed but also how they are interpreted within a cultural context. Metaphors, symbols, and expressions in folk music gain meaning only within the shared cultural knowledge of the community, which is preserved through customs and traditions. The social organization of folklore performance is another important aspect. In traditional Uzbek society, musical activities are often organized collectively rather than individually. Performances take place in family gatherings, community celebrations, and ritual events where participation is encouraged from all members of society. This collective structure reflects the communal values embedded in national customs, where music serves as a shared experience rather than individual entertainment. Moreover, folklore music is deeply connected with seasonal and agricultural cycles. Many traditional songs are performed during planting, harvesting, and seasonal celebrations, reflecting the close relationship between human life and nature. National customs regulate these performances according to the rhythm of rural life, ensuring that music remains integrated into daily activities and environmental awareness. Another essential factor is the role of master-apprentice relationships in the transmission of folklore music. Traditional knowledge is usually passed down from experienced performers to younger generations through direct practice and oral instruction. This educational model is supported by national customs that emphasize respect for elders and continuity of tradition. As a result, learning folklore music is not only a technical process but also a cultural and moral upbringing. In contemporary society, folklore music continues to evolve under the influence of modern media, education systems, and global cultural trends. However, national customs still serve as a stabilizing foundation that maintains the authenticity of performance practices. Many cultural institutions and educational programs now actively integrate folklore music into curricula, ensuring that younger generations remain connected to their cultural roots.

## Conclusion.

Uzbek folklore music represents a deeply rooted cultural system in which national customs play a



fundamental and inseparable role. Throughout this study, it has been demonstrated that folklore music is not only an artistic form of expression but also a reflection of the historical memory, social values, and spiritual life of the Uzbek people. National customs determine the structure, context, and meaning of musical performance, ensuring its continuity across generations. The analysis shows that folklore music functions as a living cultural heritage that connects the past with the present. It preserves traditional knowledge, moral values, and collective identity through oral transmission and communal participation. Rituals, ceremonies, and everyday social practices provide the main environment in which folklore music develops and maintains its relevance. In addition, Uzbek national customs ensure the stability and authenticity of folklore music even in the conditions of modern cultural transformation. While globalization introduces new influences, traditional customs continue to serve as a protective framework that maintains cultural uniqueness. At the same time, folklore music adapts to contemporary contexts without losing its essential cultural meaning. Overall, the close relationship between folklore music and national customs highlights the importance of preserving intangible cultural heritage. Supporting traditional performance practices, educating younger generations, and promoting cultural awareness are essential for maintaining this heritage. Uzbek folklore music, enriched and guided by national customs, remains a powerful symbol of cultural identity and national continuity.

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